DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 218 273 SP 020 447

AUTHOR Churukian, George A.
TITLE Perceived Learning in the Classroom and Teacher-Student Interpersonal Relationships.
PUB DATE Apr 82
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at Teacher Education 80-90 International Seminar (2nd, Groningen, Netherlands, April, 1982).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; College Students; Helping Relationship; Higher Education; *Interpersonal Competence; *Student Attitudes; *Student Evaluation of Teacher Performance; *Student Teacher Relationship; *Teacher Behavior; Teacher Characteristics; Teacher Education; Teacher Effectiveness

ABSTRACT

The general hypothesis of this study was that college students, according to their perception of the amount of learning achieved in a class, will judge the quality of the interpersonal relationships between them and their teachers differently. Specifically, the hypotheses tested were that (1) students in "learn-most" classes would perceive themselves as receiving from their teacher more regard as individuals, more empathetic understanding, more acceptance of themselves as unique individuals, and more feelings of being totally themselves, than would students in "learn-least" classes; and (2) There would be differences between the "learn-most" and "learn-least" students on the basis of sex, grade received, subject, level of course, and student year. The instrument employed to obtain a measure of interpersonal relationships was the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (1962). One hundred eighteen college students, randomly assigned to two groups, completed the inventory. One group responded with their perceptions of the teacher from whom they learned the most, and the other group responded with their perceptions of the teacher from whom they learned the least. Findings tended to substantiate the general hypothesis. "Learn most" students judged the quality of their interpersonal relationships with their teachers more positively than did "learn least" students. The second hypothesis was not proved. The implications of the findings are that teacher education programs should emphasize the ability to develop positive interpersonal relationships with students rather than methods and materials. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED218273

PERCEIVED LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM AND TEACHER - STUDENT INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

George A. Churukian
Illinois Wesleyan University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

✓ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
George A. Churukian

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SP 020 447

Paper presented at Teacher Education 80-90 2nd International Seminar, Hosted by The University of Groningen, The Netherlands, April 1982.

PERCEIVED LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM

AND TEACHER - STUDENT INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

George A. Churukian
Illinois Wesleyan University

The purpose of this study was to apply the findings of Mason and Blumberg (1969) to the college classroom. Specifically this study was to determine if differences in teacher-student interpersonal relationships were related to the perceptions students held of the classroom in which they learned most and that in which they learned least.

Teaching and learning are very complex. It is not known what makes a good teacher or how individuals learn. However, it is known that given two equally well trained teachers, one of them will probably create a more productive learning environment than the other. What makes the difference is a mix of factors that combine to produce a situation that is productive to the learners. There are many factors in the mix and they include inputs from the teacher and students. These inputs take the form of behavior. They create an interactive social system that has definable characteristics.

One of the results of any particular set of behavior inputs into the classroom social system is the nature of the interpersonal relationships developed between the students and the teacher. Since the teacher is the local person in the classroom, it is his behavior that probably has the most direct bearing on the quality of these relationships.

Qualitative Measures of Interpersonal Relationships. Rogers' work in psychotherapy has enabled him to formulate a conception of teaching and learning effectiveness in which significant learning may occur on the part of the learner. In a series of papers, Rogers (1958, 1959, and 1969) has identified certain qualities or behaviors of therapists which facilitate learning in their clients.

Paper presented at Teacher Education 80-90 2nd International Seminar, Hosted by The University of Groningen, The Netherlands, April 1982.

Briefly stated, these qualities are congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathic understanding.

Congruence means the person is being totally himself in interaction with others. The person can be seen as a real person with others. Unconditionality of positive regard means he accepts the other person as a separate person with persmission for him to have his own feelings and experience and to find his own meaning in them. Empathic understanding means the person has the ability to understand the other person's reactions from his point of view. Along with these conditions to be communicated to the learner (Rogers, 1959: 235).

Rogers' work suggests that the initiation of learning in the dyadic situation does not rest solely upon the skills of the teacher but rests upon certain attitudinal qualities which exist in the relationship between student and teacher.

Barrett-Lennard (1962) developed an instrument which measures the qualities of regard, empathy, unconditionality of regard, and congruence. These qualities are similar to those of Rogers; however, it appears that Barrett-Lennard has expanded and refined the quality of unconditionality of regard into an added quality of regard, which is the general tendency (at a given time) of the amount of esteem one person holds for another.

Much of the above theory and findings have dealt primarily with the therapist-client relationship. This might lead one to say that these studies have no bearing on the present context. However, work by Fiedler (1950), Soper and Combs (1962), and Combs and Soper (1963) supports the observations of Combs and Syngg (1959) and Rogers (1958) that the nature of a good helping relationship is generally recognized by everyone.

These notions suggest for significatn learning to take place in the teaching situation, regard, empathy, unconditionality of regard, and congruence should be

exhibited by the teacher and perceived by the student.

HYPOTHESIS

The general hypothesis of the study was that students in the classroom they defined as the one in which they learned most will judge the quality of the interpersonal relations between them and their respective teachers differently than will those students in the classroom which they defined as the one where they learned the least. These findings would be independent of sex, year in school, level of course, subject, and grade received in the course.

Specifically, the hypotheses tested were:

1. Students in the learn-most classrooms would perceive themselves as receiving more regard as individuals from their teachers than would those students in the learn-least classrooms.
2. Students in the learn-most classrooms would perceive themselves as receiving more empathy as individuals from their teachers than would those students in the learn-least classrooms.
3. Students in the learn-most classrooms would perceive themselves as receiving more unconditionality of regard as individuals from their teachers than would those students in the learn-least classroom.
4. Students in the learn-most classrooms would perceive themselves as receiving more congruence as individuals from their teachers than would those students in the learn-least classroom.
5. There would be a difference between learn-most and learn-least on the basis of sex.
6. There would be a difference between learn-most and learn-least on the basis of grade received in the course.
7. There would be a difference between learn-most and learn-least on the basis of subject taken.

8. There would be a difference between learn-most and learn-least on the basis of level of course taken.
9. There would be a difference between learn-most and learn-least on the basis of year student is in school.

PROCEDURES

Instrument. The instrument employed to obtain a measure of interpersonal relationships was the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (1962). This inventory, although developed originally for use in the therapeutic setting, has seen extensive use in the field of education. Mason and Blumberg (1969) used the inventory to investigate the perceived educational value of the classroom and the teacher-pupil interpersonal relationships. Churukian and Cyran (1972) in a study with student teachers, used the inventory to see whether or not teacher perceptions of the quality of their interpersonal relationships with their supervisor were related to teacher perceptions of supervisor style. The Relationship Inventory (short form) is a thirty-two item questionnaire made up of scales concerned with regard, empathy, unconditionality of regard, and congruence. Each scale is composed of four positively oriented and four negatively oriented items. Each item may be rated from plus three, "I strongly feel that it is true", to minus three, "I strongly feel that it is not true". The negatively oriented items are constructed so that a "minus" rating is treated as a "plus" as far as interpersonal relations are concerned. On each scale it is possible to get a total score ranging from plus twenty-four to minus twenty-four.

Sample. Data were collected from one hundred eighteen students who were enrolled in philosophy courses during the spring semester in a small liberal arts college. There were sixty-three males and fifty-five females.

Method. The students were randomly assigned to two nearly equal groups. One group was asked to complete the Relationship Inventory by keeping in mind the teacher they felt they learned the most from the previous semester. The other group was asked to complete the Relationship Inventory by keeping in mind the teacher they felt they learned the least from the previous semester. All students were asked to indicate sex, grade received in the course, level of course, subject area, and year in school.

There were three inventories which were not completed. This resulted in the learn-most group having N=58, while in the learn-least group N=57.

RESULTS

The data were analyzed by performing t-tests on the learn-most group means versus the learn-least group across the four subscales. Table I shows the results of this analysis

TABLE I

Comparisons of Mean Subscale Scores of the Relationship Inventory for "Learn Most" (LM) and "Learn Least" (LL) Groups

Subscale	LM, N=58	LL, N=57	t	p
Regard	5.06	9.41	10.47	.001
Empathy	6.69	9.44	10.40	.001
Unconditionality of Regard	6.25	6.85	3.08	.01
Congruence	7.25	9.87	10.00	.001

Reference to Table I indicates that three of the first four hypotheses were supported at the .001 level of confidence, while the fourth hypothesis was supported at the .01 level of confidence. The data failed to reject hypotheses 1, 2, 3 and 4. The results of Table I seem to indicate that students in the learn-most classroom

did perceive themselves as receiving more regard, empathy, unconditionality of regard, and congruence as individuals from their teacher than did those students in the learn-least classrooms.

The data were analyzed for the remaining hypotheses by performing Chi-squares on the learn-most groups versus the learn-least groups on the basis of sex, grade received in course, subject, level of course and year in school. Table II shows the results of this analysis.

TABLE II

Comparisons of Learn-most Versus Learn-least on the Basis of Sex, Grade Received, Subject, Level, and Year

Basis	df	Chi-Square	p
Sex	1	.01	N.S.
Grade Received	5	6.09	N.S.
Subject	6	4.17	N.S.
Level	3	4.13	N.S.
Year	3	.87	N.S.

Reference to Table II indicates that these five hypotheses were not supported at the .05 level of confidence. The results of Table II seem to indicate that there does not seem to be any difference between the learn-most and learn-least groups on the basis of sex, grade received in the course, subject, level of the course, and year in school.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study tend to substantiate the general hypotheses. Students in the classroom in which they perceived they learned most judged the quality of their interpersonal relationship with the teacher more positively than

did those students in the classrooms in which they perceived they learned least. These perceptions are independent of sex, grade received in the course, subject of the course, level of the course, and year student is in school.

The major implication which arises is that the value of the learning situation seems to be associated with the quality of the interpersonal relationships that exist between student and teacher. Past studies of learning in the classroom tend to focus on observables. These include lighting, temperature, use of media, verbal patterns, and methods of instruction. These techniques do not investigate the unobservable component of the classroom, the interpersonal relationship between student and teacher. Further implications would suggest the universality of these qualities of interpersonal relationships between individuals in different cultures as well as in government, religion, business, health care, or any field where individuals interact with one another.

Specifically, what are the implications for teacher education? Presently teacher education programs stress methods and materials, instead emphasis should be placed on being able to develop positive interpersonal relationships with students, using the context of methods and materials as the vehicle. The teacher who is in control of self, student, classroom environment, has the ability to predict how a student will act and feel in a variety of classroom situations, and be able to respond to a student's actions in a supportive, nonthreatening manner will promote greater learning as perceived by the student. These ideas are not new. The literature has been promoting this approach for for significant manner to meet the affective needs of students as well as it has met the cognitive needs.

REFERENCES

Barrett-Lennard, G. T. "Dimensions of Therapist Response as Causal Factors in Therapeutic Change." Psychological Monographs 76 (1962): Whole No. 562, 1-36.

Churukian, G. A. and Cryan, J. R. "Interpersonal Perceptions as a Factor in Teacher Perceptions of Supervisory Style." Research in Education 7 (October 1972): 97, ED 064 233.

Combs, A. and Soper, D. "The Helping Relationship as Described by 'Good' and 'Poor' Teachers." The Journal of Teacher Education 14 (March, 1963): 64-68.

Combs, A. W. and Snygg, D. Individual Behavior. New York: Harper, 1959.

Fiedler, F. "The Concept of an Ideal Therapeutic Relationship." Journal of Consulting Psychology 14 (1950): 239-245.

Mason, J. and Blumberg, A. "Perceived Educational Value of the Classroom and Teacher-Pupil Interpersonal Relationships." Journal of Secondary Education 44 (March 1969): 135-139.

Rogers, C. "The Characteristics of a Helping Relationship." Personnel and Guidance Journal 37 (1958): 6-16.

Rogers, C. "Significant Learning: In Therapy and in Education." Educational Leadership 16 (1959): 232-242.

Rogers, C. "The Interpersonal Relationship in the Facilitation of Learning." In Freedom to Learn. Columbus: Merrill, 1969.

Soper, D. and Combs, A. "The Helping Relationship as Seen by Teachers and Therapists." Journal of Consulting Psychology 26 (1962): 288.